HCR

Military Health System
Health Care Reengineering

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Implementing Physician Telephone Triage and Electronic Consults to Increase Access

The Initiative: High demand by Weed Army Community Hospital, Fort Irwin, Calif., beneficiaries routinely led to acute care appointments being completely booked early in the morning. This impacted the ability to meet Department of Defense standards and left the emergency room as the only source of acute care. Physicians and staff members developed a new appointment system that allows patients to call in and leave an electronic consult for their primary care physicians, who return the calls and triage patients to the appropriate level of care.

The Results: The following benefits have been realized:

- Increased appointment availability
- Decreased congestion on the appointment telephone line
- Fewer follow-up visits as physicians order tests before the visit
- Shorter appointment duration due to physician familiarity with and prior documentation of the patient complaint
- Better appointment allocation based on physician knowledge of individual patient needs

Category: Clinical–Access; *Reference* #99029.

Ask A Nurse First

The Initiative: Naval Hospital Jacksonville instituted a program where specially trained registered nurses, using physician-approved guidelines, provide health information and advice 24 hours a day based on the nature and severity of a caller's condition. Patients who call Ask A Nurse First are questioned about their health history, such as allergies, current or past medical conditions, and prescription drugs. On the basis of this information, the nurse can decide if the patient needs to see a health care provider or whether advice for home health care is most appropriate. If a patient needs to see a physician, the nurse gives instructions on how to manage the problem until the appointment.

The Results: The Ask A Nurse First call center has greatly enhanced patient services and also benefits TRICARE Prime beneficiaries by facilitating appointments for callers with urgent needs and providing a record of the call to the patient's primary care manager.

Category: Clinical–Access; *Reference* #99054.

Using a Clinical Integrated Workstation (CIW)

The Initiative: CIW 3.0 is a client-server solution that provides an encounter-centered interface for the provider at the point of care. This Windows-based application automatically retrieves critical data elements (active medications, chronic illness, hospitalizations, immunizations, allergies, patient demographics, special command interest items, etc.) and displays them in user-configured windows on the provider's electronic desktop. Pre-designed templates and "pick lists" of known values simplify encounter documentation.

The Results: The CIW system increases availability of critical patient information by making data in the system immediately accessible to the provider. This is particularly useful for walk-in patients and telephone consults. The CIW also accommodates standard International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and Current Procedure Terminology (CPT) codes for diagnoses and procedures.

Category: Clinical; *Reference* #99024.

Child/Adolescent Telepsychiatry Clinic

***The Initiative:*** Military primary care providers are called upon to treat complex childhood behavioral and mental health problems, frequently in isolated duty stations without the support of a child psychiatrist. The Department of Psychiatry at Naval Medical Center San Diego and the Office of the Lead Agent, TRICARE Region 9, collaborated to establish a Child and Adolescent Telepsychiatry Clinic to provide better access and care for children and to reduce family travel time and expense.

The Results: Twelve patients were seen in the first three months for problems as varied as severe attention decicit hyperactivity disorder, depression, oppositional defiant disorder, adjustment disorder and autism-related behavior disorders. Family feedback regarding quality of care and convenience of the consult has been very positive.

Category: Clinical–Access; ***Reference*** #99050.

Computer Assisted Quality Assurance (QA) and Robotically Enhanced Dispensing Program
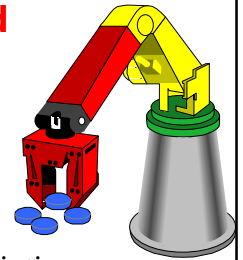
The Initiative: The 6th Medical Group, MacDill AFB, reengineered pharmacy services using PharmCARE technology. PharmCARE is an automated system with a comprehensive QA program, Pharmacy-2000. The robotics component uses "arms" to retrieve medicines stored in counting cassettes to fill the prescription. Once it is filled, the Pharmacy-2000 QA program checks it and displays the patient's name on a light board.

Filling prescriptions more efficiently enables pharmacy technicians to focus on patient education and counseling, which encourages better compliance and ultimately improves outcomes. The PharmCARE Center also provides personalized medication information sheets to reinforce the technician's medication counseling and Health Touch machines that provide patients with information about medications, diseases, and health care concerns.

The Results: PharmCARE accelerated the filling and labeling process, allowing technicians more time to respond to patient questions and concerns.

Category: Administrative–Pharmacy; ***Reference*** #99033.

What Is MHS Reengineering?

The Military Health System (MHS) defines reengineering as, "A spectrum of activities from incremental or continuous improvement to radical transformation that critically rethinks and redesigns products and service processes to achieve mission performance gains." Reengineering improves quality of care and access to care, increases satisfaction of patients and staff, and decreases health care delivery costs.

What are fact sheets?

People in the MHS share their innovative programs with the Health Care Reengineering (HCR) Program by submitting initiatives. We then summarize selected initiatives and results in fact sheets. One goal is to give MHS staff a sampling of how reengineering can help them and their customers. Another is to encourage the MHS staff to look on the HCR Web site for more initiatives.

How can I get more information on initiatives?

We post initiatives on our Web site. You can download the complete submission, which also contains contact information for the initiative submitter. After surfing to the Reengineering Program's home page, just go to "Innovations & Initiatives," then follow the link to the "Abstracts." Initiatives are organized by category and reference number.

How can I share my initiatives?

Submissions from the field are critical to the success of the MHS and everyone in the MHS is encouraged to participate. Initiatives can be submitted via the World Wide Web, fax, e-mail and regular mail.

How can I contact the HCR staff?

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